Americans interest in improving the conditions of life in the United States was rooted both in politics and religion. As democracy expanded throughout the country, more white men were now able to vote than ever before. Now that areas such as the way we chose our presidential candidate had become simpler and more straightforward, citizens started to become aware of other aspects of our American system that could also be reformed. The subjects of women's rights and slavery would become major discussion topics in the coming years for American citizens who were eager to reform and improve every possible aspect of our society. But, the expansion of politics was not the only driving factor in the nation's reform. Rather, religion or more specifically, the Great Awankening sparked along with a swarm of new ideas concerning aspects of the Christian religion, an impulse to reform. In the early 1800s many Protestants still believed in predestination or the idea that God decided the fate of a person's soul before birth, but a wave of new ministers began to preach of the "doctrine of free will" which stated that a person's own actions determined their salvation. These new ideas mixed nicely with the wave of democracy and independance that was sweeping the nation during this time period. Soon these political and religious ideals would be rolled together into a neat package, held securely in place by American's eagerness to improve their homeland, and stamped with the label Social Reform.

Many Americans new their beloved nation was well overdue for a sprucing up, but only a select few took it upon themselves to individually work towards a reform of an area in which they had a particular interest. Individuals like Dorothea Dix who spearheaded the prison reform. Whilst touring the jails of Massachusetts she was appalled at the awful and inhumane conditions many prisoners including the mentally ill were forced to live in. Dorothea lobbied city and state governments around the country to build safe and humane mental hospitals where the mentally ill could live comfortably and peacefully. Another citizen of Massachusetts who personally took up the responsibility of reform was Horace Mann an individual who took the lead in education reform